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ABSTRACT

This research examined one aspect of leader behavior and a personality characteristic of the subordinate, i.e., authoritarianism and how it relates to the attitudes and performance of the subordinate. It was generally hypothesized that participation, job satisfaction, and effectiveness would be higher and role conflict and role ambiguity would be lower under conditions in which tolerance for freedom exhibited by the boss was compatible with the degree of authoritarianism of the subordinate. Findings include the following: (1) congruency was found to be important in only one case; (2) where a high authoritarian subordinate reported working for a supervisor who was low in tolerance for freedom, the level of perceived subordinate influence over the job was highest; (3) the high authoritarian subordinate felt he had more opportunity to influence his work situation when he worked for a more directive boss, and the level of job satisfaction was highest; and (4) the most satisfying superior-subordinate pairing was one in which the subordinate was authoritarian and worked for a directive boss. (Author/TA)

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The Effect of the Interaction of Leader Behavior and Subordinate Authoritarianism

by

Henry L. Tosi

Early leadership studies emphasized personality characteristics of leaders. When this line of research was found wanting, the direction shifted to studies of leader behavior. From this vein come such concepts as "employee-centered," "considerate," and so forth. The use of leader behavior concepts, too, produced inconclusive results in replicative studies. While an "employee centered" supervisor was "effective" under one set of conditions in one research study, in later studies the same results did not obtain. Inconclusive results of this nature led theorists to formulate and research approaches which considered leadership under different conditions. One such approach is Fiedler's (1967). He postulates that the effective leadership style is contingent on the position power of a leader and the favorableness of the relationships within the group. In an earlier study, Vroom (1960) found the personality characteristics of the subordinate affected his reactions to different leader style. Both these approaches have had a substantial impact on the leadership literature. This evidence is convincing that leadership effectiveness must take into account factors other than the leader himself.

This research examines one aspect of leader behavior and a personality characteristic of the subordinate, i.e., authoritarianism and how they

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relate to the attitudes and performance of the subordinate.

An early effort in this direction was a laboratory study by Haythorn (1958) designed to investigate the relationship between leader and follower personalities and behavior in small groups. Haythorn examined groups which were composed of members that were either high or low in authoritarianism. Compatibility was defined as a condition in which the leader and the group were similar in authoritarianism, i.e., either both were high or both were low. Incompatibility was a situation in which the leader's level of authoritarianism was different from that of the groups, i.e., a high authoritarian leader was matched with a low authoritarian group and vice versa.

In the main, his results lead to the conclusions that the homogenous condition was most desirable. In homogenous groups, the morale was higher and there was less personality conflict. The followers tended to strive for approval and the leaders tended to be more aggressive, less submissive and autocratic. Haythorn concluded that differences, as in the incompatible situation, create conflict and detract from group morale.

These findings would lead one to conclude that it is important, especially from the point of view of satisfaction, morale, and conflict levels in a group to match the personality of the leader with that of the subordinate. This leads to a form of congruency hypotheses about subordinate/superior interrelationships and effectiveness. Hypotheses of this type would be of the general form

> Performance (or satisfaction, etc.) will be higher under conditions in which the personality of the leader is similar to the personality of the subordinate.

Essentially, this position would argue that outcomes in groups would be more effective when the leader and the subordinate were similar on personality dimensions, especially, authoritarianism.

Yet, another argument could be made. Perhaps the low authoritarian subordinate might respond more positively to more guidance and direction from his boss. If some degree of structure is needed, and the leader provides structure and guidance to the situation, then the low authoritarian subordinate may respond positively to more directive leadership. This line of reasoning leads to a set of hypotheses regarding the superior/subordinate interrelationship which could be designated as <u>complementarity</u> hypotheses. They would be of a form which would state that

> Performance (or satisfaction, etc.) will be higher under conditions in which the personality characteristics of the superior are opposite of those of the subordinate.

While Haythorn focussed on the authoritarianism of both the leader and the group members, this study is slightly different in that it examines how the level of authoritarianism interacts with one aspect of leader behavior, i.e., tolerance for freedom.

Four groups were examined, high authoritarian subordinates who worked for either high or low tolerance for freedom bosses and low authoritarian subordinates who worked for either high or low authoritarian bosses. Under these four conditions, the subject's perceptions of role conflict and ambiguity, job threat and anxiety and job satisfaction were examined, along with some effectiveness measures drawn from company records.

METHOD

A set of hypotheses was formulated and questionnaires administered to a group of managers to conduct the research.

Hypotheses

The original hypotheses for this research were of the congruency type, i.e., that both performance and perceptions of the job situations of the subjects would be more satisfactory under congruency conditions than under complementarity conditions.

It was generally hypothesized that participation, job satisfaction and effectiveness would be higher and role conflict, role ambiguity would be lower under conditions in which the tolerance for freedom exhibited by the boss was compatible with the degree of authoritarianism of the subordinate. That is, high tolerance for freedom bosses paired with low authoritarian subordinates and low tolerance for freedom bosses paired with high authoritarian subordinates would comprise a condition in which there was more satisfaction, less conflict, and more effectiveness than in situations in which high authoritarian subordinates were paired with high tolerance for freedom bosses and low authoritarian subordinates were paired with low tolerance for freedom bosses.

The Measures. Data were collected by questionnaires administered to 488 managers of retail finance offices in a large consumer finance firm. The respondents completed forms which included the following sub-scales.

1. Authoritarianism
2. Job Satisfaction
3. Role Conflict
4. Role Ambiguity
5. Job Threat and Anxiety
6. Participation
7. Boss Tolerance for Freedom

The authoritarian subscale is a thirteen item version of that used by

Vroom (1960). The items were originally drawn from the F scale (Adorno, et al. 1950).

Participation is a measure of the level of influence one believes he has in his work situation (Vroom, 1960). The items are

1. In general, how much influence do you feel you have on what goes on in your office?
2. To what degree do you think you can influence the decisions of your immediate superior regarding things about which you are concerned?
3. How frequently does your superior ask your opinion when a problem comes up which involves your work?
4. If you have a suggestion for improving the job or changing the operation in some way how easy is it for you to get your ideas across to your immediate superior?

Job Satisfaction was measured using the following three item subscale (Vroom, 1960).

1. How well do you like your supervisory work?
2. How much chance does your job give you to do the things you like to do?
3. How good is your immediate supervisor in dealing with people?

The job threat and anxiety measure is an a priori scale. It is intended to measure the manager's concern about his job as it may be affected by conditions in the future for which he may have little or no control. The items on this scale are

1. How likely is it that a major problem, which you cannot now foresee will effect your job in the next year or so?
2. How likely is it that your boss will evaluate performance significantly lower than you think it should be rated?
3. If the performance of your group drops significantly in the next two years how likely is it that you would be fired, demoted, or transferred?

4. To what extent do you think your boss holds the "loss of your job" over your head as a reason for working hard at improving performance?

Role Conflict represents a condition under which the individual is placed in a situation where he is exposed to conflicting demands or role requirements. Role conflict, and the role ambiguity measures described below, were measured using items developed by Rizzo, et al. (1970). A ten item subscale was used to measure role conflict. Some illustrative items from the role conflict scale are:

1. I have to do things that should be done differently.
2. I have to break a rule or policy in carrying out an assignment.
3. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.

Role ambiguity was measured using ten items from the same scale (Rizzo, et al. 1970). The role ambiguity items stress the clarity of behavioral requirements in the position. Some illustrative items from the role ambiguity scale are:

1. I feel certain about how much authority I have.
2. I have to feel my way in performing my duties.
3. I am uncertain about how my job is linked to others in the company.

The Tolerance for Freedom of the superior was measured by using the tolerance for freedom subscale of Form XII of the Leader Behavior Description questionnaire. The tolerance for freedom subscale is a measure of the extent to which a leader allows followers scope for initiative, decision and action. Some illustrative items from this ten item subscale are:

1. He allows members complete freedom in their work.
2. He permits the members to use their own judgment in solving problems.

3. He lets the members do their work the way they think best.

4. He trusts the members to exercise good judgment.

This scale is a measure of the degree of job freedom and latitude allowed an individual in a job. The items are statements of boss behavior, as observed by the subordinate, rather than the subordinate's perception of superior's beliefs or the superior's report of his own attitudes or behavior. Thus, the tolerance for freedom measure is the subordinate's perception of the leader's behavior as it relates to the degree of discretion provided and the subordinate's performance of the job.

Effectiveness, or productivity, was evaluated using a number of "hard" criteria. These were collected from company records.

1. Turnover. Personnel turnover was computed by determining the ratio between the number of people that left employment and the total work force at the end of the year.

2. Profit objective. Each office was assigned a budgeted profit objective. The measure here was the percent of achievement of this objective.

3. Budgeted losses. Each office was assigned a budgeted loss for the year. The percentage of loss was used as the measure.

4. Return on investment. The return on investment of particular office was calculated by determining the ratio between the profits and the total amount of funds available for investment in loans.

The questionnaire contained all the subscales, except for the "effectiveness criteria" which were taken from company records. One possibility for explaining the relationships between variables which must not be discounted is that of "response set bias." This simply means that most items will be answered positively if the job situation is generally "good," and if it is bad, the responses may be negative. Additionally, the measures are of perceptions and attitudes, which may be different from the "objective reality."

The Research Setting

These data were collected from 488 managers of consumer loan offices of a large, geographically dispersed finance organization. The branch manager is responsible for the operation of an office which may have from two to seven employees. He deals directly with customers in negotiating loans and may well be concerned with the evaluation of other investment opportunities. While he is subject to some general corporate policy guidelines and operating procedures, he may have considerable latitude in decisions simply because of variations in both market conditions and state laws which govern the operation of the consumer loan industry.

His immediate supervisor is generally not in the same physical location. In fact, it is highly likely that branch managers report to a regional supervisor who is quite some distance away. The regional supervisor supervises between 25 and 30 branches. He may have several staff assistants who aid him in regional administration and management.

The tasks of the branch managers are fairly similar from office to office. There is little variation in procedural requirements and in their relationship with higher organization levels of the firm. Thus, the variability in job requirements is extremely limited, which would discount the possibility of this factor being a major one which would affect the findings of the study.

Perhaps the only difference of importance, and one which was not controlled for in the analysis here is the difference in branch size. Yet, the range of the number of personnel within branches is not too extreme. It is from two to seven. It is felt, therefore, that size would have little effect on the results.

Method

The questionnaire which contained the subscales was distributed by mail to 537 branch managers. Returns were received from 488 of the 537 managers.

The subjects were dichotomized into high and low groups for both authoritarianism and the boss' tolerance for freedom. Dichotomizing in this fashion caused the subjects to be grouped in combinations of highs and lows for each of these two variables. These two variables were used as main effects in an analysis of variance. A two way analysis of variance was performed using as independent variables the effectiveness measures, participation, job satisfaction, job threat and anxiety, role conflict, and role ambiguity. Scheffe's test was used when the analysis of variance resulted in significant differences. This statistical procedure tests the equality of the category means. It reveals whether there are significant differences between the category means.

FINDINGS

The results of the analyses of variance are reported in this section. The tables below report the pertinent data for those analyses in which there were significant differences obtained. There were no significant effects for any of the effectiveness variables. No significant difference was found in the level of role ambiguity that could be attributed to the main effects or the interaction effects. These analyses of variance are not reported here.

Table 1 below reports the analysis of variance for participation.

(Table 1 goes about here)

Both main effects were significant for the level of participation. Interestingly, those who worked for a low tolerance for freedom boss reported significantly higher levels of participation or psychological influence than those who worked for the high tolerance for freedom boss. Also, those subordinates describing themselves high in authoritarianism reported higher levels of participation than those subordinates reporting the lower levels of authoritarianism. There were no significant interaction effects.

Table 2 presents the results of the analysis of variance for job

(Table 2 goes about here)

satisfaction. Again, as in the data above, there were significant main effects but no significant interaction. Those subordinates who describe their boss as being high in tolerance for freedom reported lower levels of job satisfaction than those subordinates who reported their bosses as being low in tolerance for freedom. Also, the high authoritarians reported more job satisfaction than the low authoritarians. There was no significant interaction effect.

Table 3 presents the analysis of variance for job threat anxiety.

(Table 3 goes about here)

Only the tolerance for freedom effect was significant here. Those subordinates working for a boss described as being high tolerance for freedom reported high levels of job threat and anxiety than those who worked for a boss that was described as being low in tolerance for freedom. The authoritarianism of the subordinate was not significant. The interaction effect approached significance.

Table 4 presents the data for the results of the analysis of variance for role conflict.

(Table 4 goes about here)

Those subordinates describing their boss high in tolerance for freedom report higher levels of role conflict than those who describe their superior as being low in tolerance. The level of authoritarianism of the subordinate was not significant, and neither was the interaction effect.

DISCUSSION

Leader tolerance for freedom and subordinate authoritarianism were not related to performance measures. This leader behavior and subordinate personality characteristic neither independently nor in any combination accounted for any performance differences among the branch managers. Performance was no doubt affected by other variables, such as variations in competitive conditions, different types of markets and the size of the market. These may be more important factors in determining the success of a branch manager than the manner in which he interacts with subordinates. But then, one might expect the profits, losses, and return on investment not to vary markedly with leader behavior since the customer may be more attracted to the firm by its national, or even regional, reputation. This may be developed by marketing effects, including advertising and public relations, that are beyond the range of the branch manager, in terms of impact.

Turnover was perhaps the most likely performance measure which would be related to the variables that were the focus of this study. Yet, even this factor was not related to different levels of leader behavior and subordinate authoritarianism.

The individual's attitude and perception of the job were, however, related to leader behavior and subordinate authoritarianism. But, here

too, the results were somewhat unexpected. The congruency hypotheses were not supported, or congruency was found to be important in only one case. Where a high authoritarian subordinate reported working for a supervisor who was low in tolerance for freedom the level of perceived subordinate influence over the job was highest. The high authoritarian subordinate felt he had more opportunity to influence his work situation when he worked for a more directive boss.

Similarly, in this situation, the level of job satisfaction was highest. The most satisfying superior-subordinate pairing was one in which the subordinate was authoritarian and worked for a directive boss.

Now, this is precisely what the congruency hypothesis would suggest. But it would go one step further. High levels of influence and satisfaction would obtain where a low authoritarian subordinate reported his supervisor as being high in tolerance for freedom. Yet this was not the case. Rather, it was the opposite, i.e., the lowest level of participation and job satisfaction.

In incongruent situations, the levels of participation and satisfaction were higher than that noted immediately above. These situations have some degree of structure present, either high authoritarian subordinates or low tolerance for freedom bosses, in addition to that provided by the job definition. These situations are more satisfying and provide the subordinate with perception of higher influence than the low authoritarian-high tolerance for freedom case.

The inference is clear. Some parameters must exist within which people operate. These may arise from the boss, or from the subordinate's personality. If both are lacking, the situation is less satisfying.

The authoritarianism of the subordinate has little to do with the degree of role conflict and job anxiety present. Both job anxiety, defined as concern about the future, and role conflict, defined as inconsistent demands on an individual, were highest under high tolerance for freedom bosses. Perhaps the leader who provides more autonomy and less guidance in the job also fails to provide cues to subordinates about how he will evaluate their work. Likewise, the subordinate may find himself in a situation where he responds to influence attempts from several different points in the organization, seeking direction that is not forthcoming from his boss.

SUMMARY

From these data, it appears that the work situation must have some degree of structure. This may be provided by the boss, or it may come from the subordinate. But then Fiedler (1967) made this point with performance, where he found some degree of directiveness effective in some situations. Here it was found to have positive effects on attitudes and involvement.

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Table 1. The Effect on Participation

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Authoritarianism	47.18	1	47.18	9.56	.002
Tol. For Freedom	304.13	1	304.13	61.62	.0005
Interaction	11.51	1	11.51	2.33	.12
Within	2,388.68	484	4.94		

CELL MEANS

TOLERANCE FOR FREEDOM

		Low	High
Authoritarianism	Low	15.6488	12.9063
	High	16.1065	14.2570

Significance of Difference

Between Cell Means

Comparison	Significance
LA-LTF vs LA-HTF	.01
LA-LTF vs HA-LTF	.01
HA-LTF vs HA-HTF	.01
HA-HTF vs LA-HTF	.01
LA-HTF vs HA-LTF	.01
LA-LTF vs HA-HTF	.25

Table 2. The Effect on Job Satisfaction

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Authoritarianism	11.05	1	11.05	5.27	.021
Tol. For Freedom	97.98	1	97.98	46.77	.0005
Interaction	2.26	1	2.26	1.08	.30
Within	1,013.84	484	2.04		

CELL MEANS

TOLERANCE FOR FREEDOM

		Low	High
Authoritarianism	Low	12.7512	11.2500
	High	12.9907	11.8857

Significance of Difference

Between Cell Means

Comparison	Significance
LA-LTF vs LA-HTF	.01
LA-LTF vs HA-LTF	.05
HA-LTF vs HA-HTF	.01
HA-HTF vs LS-HTF	.01
LA-HTF vs HA-LTF	.01
LA-LTF vs HA-HTF	.25

Table 3. The Effect on Job Anxiety

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Authoritarianism	9.87	1	9.87	1.29	.25
Tol. For Freedom	135.19	1	135.19	17.67	.0005
Interaction	21.56	1	21.56	2.81	.09
Within	3,704.08	484	7.65		

CELL MEANS

		TOLERANCE FOR FREEDOM	
		Low	High
Authoritarianism	Low	9.4829	11.6250
	High	9.6806	10.6000

Significance of Differences

Between Cell Means

Comparison	Significance
LA-LTF vs LA-HTF	.01
LA-LTF vs HA-LTF	.25
HA-LTF vs HA-HTF	.25
HA-HTF vs LA-HTF	.05
LA-HTF vs HA-LTF	.01
HA-LTF vs HA-HTF	.25

Table 4. The Effect on Role Conflict

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig
Authoritarianism	107.17	1	107.16	2.14	.14
Tol. For Freedom	691.31	1	691.31	13.77	.0005
Interaction	25.88	1	25.88	.52	
Within	24,270.63	484	50.15		

CELL MEANS

TOLERANCE FOR FREEDOM

		Low	High
Authoritarianism	Low	31.2439	35.3750
	High	30.5509	33.3429

Significance of Differences

Between Means

Comparison	Significance
LA-LTF vs LA-HTF	.01
LA-LTF vs HA-LTF	.25
HA-LTF vs HA-HTF	.01
HA-HTF vs LA-HTF	.10
LA-HTF vs HA-LTF	.01
LA-LTF vs HA-HTF	.25